

Appendix A

Governor's Task Force on Educational Excellence

Summary of Final Task Force Recommendations

1. The Task Force recommends making additional investments in smaller class sizes by increasing the per pupil SAGE payment from \$2,000 to \$2,500 to help ensure that school districts can continue to offer this important program.
2. The Task Force recommends giving strong consideration to permitting additional schools to enter into SAGE contracts with DPI. Priority would be given to schools with the highest poverty levels.
3. The Task Force recommends additional investment in before- and after-school wraparound programs in high poverty areas. Specifically, the Task Force recommends creating a state categorical aid program to provide grants to high poverty schools in both rural and urban areas for before and after school programs meeting the following criteria:
 - (a) coordinate with parent and community programs;
 - (b) coordinate other services (e.g. transportation, child care, translation services) to promote greater parental involvement in and support for their schools;
 - (c) encourage the creation of parent resource libraries/community campaigns that underscore the importance of helping children learn at home;
 - (d) increase parent volunteer opportunities in school;
 - (e) coordinate with community health programs; and
 - (f) coordinate with other related programs such as those required by SAGE.
4. The Task Force finds that a positive, respectful school climate is critical to student performance and recommends the following:
 - (a) Develop state standards for educational staff that reflect diversity and multicultural competence.
 - (b) Revise current state standards to include expectations for development of student knowledge, understanding, and respect for all diversity.
 - (c) Provide professional development opportunities, particularly in schools with significant student performance problems, regarding these new state standards and reinforcing understanding, tolerance and respect for all children.
 - (d) Encourage school districts to incorporate student and staff respect for other persons in mission statements, operating policies, and procedures.
5. The Task Force recommends substantially increasing funding for the state bilingual-bicultural categorical aid program.
6. The Task Force recommends funding for school districts that do not qualify for bilingual-bicultural categorical aid under current law but are still educating ELL students. Districts receiving such funds must demonstrate that the funds are being used to promote bilingual-bicultural education among their students.

7. The Task Force recommends increasing the state's commitment to high quality summer school programming. The Task Force did not recommend a specific mechanism for increasing funding, but rather provided two examples. These examples include:
 - (a) Increasing the current revenue limit authority factor for summer school enrollment from 40% of full time equivalent (FTE) student to a higher percentage, such as 50%, for districts that provide programming that research indicates improves student achievement.
 - (b) Allocating additional resources for summer tutoring and other special services for students in high poverty schools.
8. The Task Force recommends the creation of a 10-school pilot program focused on high poverty districts and/or schools throughout the state to develop extended year programs coordinated with other parent and community programs. Specifically, these programs would provide funding to either districts or schools that extend their school years beyond the current statutory 180-day minimum.
9. The Task Force recommends exploration of a pilot "residential school" that would recruit homeless and foster children.
10. The Task Force recommends studying the feasibility and value of funding school districts based on average daily attendance basis. The study would examine the impact of average daily attendance systems in other states, including the effect such systems have had on attendance rates and student achievement, and would take into account any additional stress that such a system might place on high poverty schools.
11. The Task Force recommends that school boards and teachers should give high priority in bargaining to compensation systems that, in a manner consistent with PI 34 or similar structures, reward the acquisition of relevant subject-area knowledge and skills. Linking salary increases to the acquisition of knowledge and skills better achieves the goal of improved teacher effectiveness and student learning than does a system based exclusively on length of service and credits earned.
12. The Task Force recommends that incentives, including state funding for pilot programs, be available to districts that agree through collective bargaining to implement a compensation plan that is more directly linked to the acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills and demonstrated improvements in pupil learning.
13. The Task Force recommends the creation of a new categorical aid program to help support the shared state and local commitment of providing mentors to new teachers under PI 34.
14. The Task Force recognizes that increasing health care costs are a national problem that, in combination with the QEO, is having a particularly negative effect on Wisconsin school district budgets. Increasing school employee health insurance costs must be addressed so that funding fringe benefits does not make needed improvements in teacher salaries impossible for districts and their taxpayers. The repeal of the QEO (recommendation #15) is a good first step to empower teachers and school boards to search for more innovative solutions to this problem.

Health care benefits bargaining should respect the fact that such benefits have been established through the collective bargaining process, often at the expense of higher

salaries. Savings achieved through health care reforms should not be viewed as resources to fill budget gaps, but as resources designated primarily for improvements to teacher salaries (or to meet other mutually agreed upon areas). While health care reforms could provide one source of funds for increasing teacher salaries, they should not be viewed as the only such source.

15. The Task Force recommends repeal of the current QEO law because it is not having a positive effect on the educational environment. As the Task Force's recommendations on teacher compensation systems and health insurance indicate, the QEO repeal recommendation is also made, in substantial part, with the expectations that such repeal will free teachers, administrators, and school boards to engage in the creative collaboration necessary to address salary structure (recommendations #11 and #12), health insurance (recommendation #14), and to provide appropriate incentives to foster student achievement in light of 2004-05 educational and economic realities.

The Task Force further recommends that all non-QEO portions of Chapter 111.70(4)(cm)(7) continue as currently stated if revenue caps continue to exist.

16. The Task Force finds that teacher recruitment, particularly of minority teachers and to under-served geographic regions and understaffed content areas, is a serious problem, and recommends that more must be done to attract teachers to the profession. Options to improve teacher recruitment include:
 - (a) Repeal of the QEO (Recommendation #15);
 - (b) Establishment of Knowledge and Skills Based Compensation systems that provide greater salary incentives to both younger teachers and master teachers. (Recommendations #11 and #12);
 - (c) Support for PI 34, including financial support for mentoring. (Recommendation #13);
 - (d) Establishment of a statewide teacher cadet program;
 - (e) Expansion of future teachers clubs, and distributive education (work-study) and youth apprenticeship-type programs that expose high school students more directly to the teaching profession; and
 - (f) Exploration of loan forgiveness plans or financial incentives that have a proven effect.
17. The Task Force finds that the number of minority teachers in Wisconsin is far too low and recommends greater attention by policymakers to improving the diversity of Wisconsin's teaching workforce. Strengthening efforts to increase the number of minority group high school and college graduates is a critical component in this effort. In addition to the options mentioned above, other options to improve the recruitment of minority teachers include:
 - (a) Exploring forgivable loans for undergraduate minority teacher education students attending a UW System institution, with a particular focus on UW-Milwaukee (UWM).
 - (b) Considering the creation of a separate category under the Minority Precollege Scholarship program for students who participate in eligible precollege programs related to careers in teaching.
18. The Task Force finds that teacher retention is a serious problem, particularly in certain high poverty and/or rural districts and in certain core subject areas. In addition to the recommendations listed above relating to the repeal of the QEO, salary structures based on the acquisition of knowledge and skills and improved pupil learning, and support for PI 34, the Task Force recommends exploring additional options to retain high quality

teachers, and to link them with the most hard-to-staff classrooms and subject areas, including:

- (a) Expanding the current state program which awards \$2,500 annual grants to teachers who receive National Board of Professional Teaching Standards certification to include teachers who receive the master educator's license under PI 34.
 - (b) Providing a state-funded grant so that to master educators in schools with greater than 50% low-income enrollment can serve as resources to students, staff and the community.
 - (c) Creating a specialty within the master teacher license category for teaching in high poverty urban and low enrollment rural districts.
19. The Task Force recommends the creation of a state-based grant program for high poverty, low achieving public middle and high schools to attract and retain highly qualified teachers. The grant, which would promote innovative teacher recruitment and retention strategies aimed at improving student learning, would be awarded by DPI for a period of five years. Applicants would be required to demonstrate that they experience problems in attracting and retaining high quality teachers, and would be required to use research-based methodologies in their proposal to address these problems. Recipients would be required to submit annual evaluations to DPI on project outcomes, including teacher retention rates, student test scores, attendance rates, graduation rates, and other educational outcome measures. Schools eligible for the grant must be both high poverty and low achieving, and must have been identified for improvement under the federal law more than two years. The grant program would be limited to 30 schools, of which at least 10 must be in MPS.
20. The Task Force recommends maintaining the state's commitment to 4K.
21. The Task Force recommends the creation of a state grant program to help cover the implementation costs of 4K.
22. The Task Force recommends providing an additional 0.1 FTE of funding for each 4K student in school districts that adopt "community approaches" to early care and education.
23. The Task Force recommends providing 1.0 FTE funding for full-day 4K programs which incorporate both parental involvement and community approaches.
24. The Task Force recommends restoration of funding for the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® and REWARD programs that to promote high quality care through the professional development of child care professionals.
25. The Task Force recommends maintaining full funding of the Wisconsin Shares Program, which provides child care subsidies to low-income families.
26. The Task Force recommends the creation of a new categorical aid program to reimburse school districts for otherwise non-reimbursed costs, above a specified base level for High-Need/Low Incidence special education students.
27. The Task Force recommends substantially increasing the state's special education categorical aid.

28. The Task Force recommends that state agencies conduct an assessment of the use of existing state resources in the areas of education, health, and school-to-work programs as they apply to individuals with disabilities and that state agencies be directed to develop a streamlined, non-duplicative process for the provision of services to such individuals. Further, the Task Force recommends directing state agencies to engage local governments and school districts to seek greater collaboration to streamline existing efforts.
29. The Task Force recommends a 20% reduction in total local property taxes, equal to a 43% reduction in school property taxes, through a dollar-for-dollar sales tax-for-property tax replacement to help create a more balanced system of school finance. The Task Force recommends a combination of increasing the state sales tax by one penny (from 5% to 6%) and an expansion of the sales tax base to generate the \$1.44 billion in revenue necessary to fund this property tax reduction. The Task Force recommends the creation of a separate segregated fund for collection and distribution of the additional sales tax revenue, allowing for future growth to be available for investment in education.

In conjunction with the use of additional sales tax revenue in place of property tax revenue, the Task Force recommends that additional relief be provided to lower income individuals who may otherwise bear a disproportionate burden of such a transition. For example, additional investments in the Homestead Credit or the establishment of a Sales Tax Credit, up to that amount which is necessary to reduce regressivity, are two mechanisms that could deliver tax relief to lower-income individuals.

Finally, the Task Force recommends exploring meaningful mechanisms to ensure that other units of government - which also rely on local property tax dollars - do not use the reduction in school property taxes as an opportunity to increase their own levies and reduce or eliminate the property tax relief delivered under this proposal.

30. The Task Force recommends renaming the “School Tax Levy Credit” the “School Property Tax Relief Credit.”
31. The Task Force recommends a “cost out” study to define what constitutes a sound, basic education and how much it costs to provide it. The study should take into consideration differences in region, and the nature of students served, including districts with disproportionate numbers of economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and students with limited English skills.
32. The Task Force recommends increasing the low revenue ceiling to a level that equals the minimum needed to provide students with the opportunity for a sound, basic education. This may or may not exceed the amount currently set in statute. Strong weight should be given to the results of the cost out study when determining the level of the ceiling.
33. The Task Force recommends renaming the “low revenue ceiling” the “foundation level”.
34. The Task Force recommends increasing the 75% carryover provision of unused revenue limit authority to 100%.
35. The Task Force finds that declining enrollment is a serious problem facing many school districts around the state. The Task Force recommends providing additional relief to declining enrollment school districts, in recognition of the marginal costs associated with

losing a student. One example of such relief would be to change the 75% exemption from a non-recurring to a recurring exemption.

36. The Task Force recommends that all districts, including declining enrollment districts, establish a Master Plan for the future efficient delivery of a sound, basic education based on enrollment projections, requirements for facilities, etc. The plans should be developed with significant public participation and review, updated regularly, and submitted to the DPI for review.

While important for all districts, a formal planning process would require declining enrollment districts to address long-term issues facing them, including reduced state aid, facilities and management issues, issues relating to distance learning and other educational and achievement related matters necessary to ensure a sound, basic education.

37. The Task Force recommends that the categorical aid for transportation be substantially increased to a figure that more accurately reflects districts' transportation costs, especially for long distance transport. The Task Force finds that transportation is a necessary service that is independent of instruction, and that some districts, particularly low density rural districts, spend a larger share of their budgets on transportation than their more compact counterparts. The Task Force recommends that the state's transportation fund be used to pay these costs.
38. The Task Force recommends the establishment of collaboration teams in each of the state's 12 Cooperative Education Service Agencies (CESAs). DPI, DOR, and other state agencies as appropriate should work with CESAs to promote greater collaboration among districts and between school districts and other units of government.
39. To provide additional resources to support instructional activities, the Task Force recommends that school districts, especially those with low enrollments, should explore consolidating services, including administrative and instructional services and multi-district collective bargaining. This consolidation can be achieved through bi- and multi-lateral agreements or through greater use of CESAs.
40. The Task Force recommends implementation of a Wisconsin Incentives for Service Collaboration (WISC) Payment.